

Class N^o _____

Book N^o _____

Middleborough, Mass., _____

NARRATIVE
OF
JAMES VAN HORNE . . .

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— — — — —
... ON THE PLAINS
OF
MICHIGAN



LAWRENCE B. ROMAINÉ
WEATHERCOCK HOUSE
MIDDLEBORO
MASS.

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FOREWORD

The greatest disasters of the American army in the Northwest during the War of 1812 were the surrender of General William Hull and his forces at Detroit on August 16, 1812 and the Fort Dearborn Massacre at Chicago on the previous day. A few days before he was forced to surrender, Hull had ordered Captain Nathan Heald, the commandant of Fort Dearborn, to abandon his post and march to Detroit. Having heard no inkling of Hull's defeat and against the better judgment of his officers, Heald obeyed orders and marched out of the fort with his little garrison of less than seventy-five men and the handful of civilians who lived in the frontier town. He was immediately met on the dunes of Lake Michigan by an overwhelming body of from four to six hundred Indians who promptly killed or captured his entire command.

Nearly all previous accounts of the Fort Dearborn Massacre have been taken from Mrs. John H. Kinzie's **Wau-bun**, a second-hand narrative which was not published until 1856, though her first **Narrative of the Massacre at Chicago** had previously appeared as a pamphlet in 1844. As Quaife points out in the introduction to the 1932 edition of **Wau-bun**, Mrs. Kinzie's romantic and vividly written story was an unreliable piece of semi-historical fiction rather than an authentic history. It was for the most part a picturesque account of the adventures of her husband's family rather than an accurate picture of a military disaster. For this reason,

our present narrative, though brief, becomes highly important for it is the autobiographical account of an eyewitness, one of the soldiers of the Fort Dearborn garrison, published only five years after the event.

Though Van Horne's narrative is a valuable account of the massacre, it is even more important for the picture it gives of the war along the Great Lakes as seen through the eyes of the Indians and their captives. And for those of us who are particularly interested in stories of Indian captivity, this little work gives us a hitherto unknown tale of adventure and privation on the frontier and of the life of the Indians in their villages and on the war path.

Both the author and his pamphlet are puzzling mysteries. We know nothing of him except what we can glean from his own story for his name does not appear in **Waubun**, in the histories of Chicago and the Northwest, in the history of Middlebury, where the narrative was printed, nor in the Van Horne genealogy. Unless he used a ghost writer, the author must have been an educated man for his simple, straightforward story is very well written. Of course it is possible the Editor Charles G. Haines put Van Horne's plain soldier narrative into presentable English.

The title page simply tells us that the narrative was printed at Middlebury, Vermont in 1817 but we know that it must have been printed by Frederick P. Allen and Charles G. Haines, publishers of the **National Standard**, the only newspaper in Middlebury at that time. It is probable that only a

hundred or two copies were printed and, being a true story of hardship and adventure during the campaign so recently ended, it is not surprising that the entire edition, with the exception of a single copy, was read to pieces and discarded nearly 140 years ago. It is indeed fortunate that one copy did survive, that it came to light by merest chance so many years later and that its discoverer is now publishing a facsimile reprint for your enjoyment.

For anyone familiar with the history of the War of 1812 along the Great Lakes detailed annotation is unnecessary. The events recorded are well known and the author tells his story clearly and, for the most part, accurately. When he relates his own experiences, his story is correct and includes many details not to be found elsewhere, such as the names of the six wounded soldiers who were killed by the Indians after the battle. The British and Indian consternation at the news of Perry's victory over their fleet on Lake Erie on September 10, 1813, is particularly interesting. The savagery of the Indians and humanity of the British officers are both vividly portrayed and the story as a whole, though brief, is important for it gives us a new eyewitness account of some of the most stirring events of the Northwestern campaign of the War of 1812.

R.W.G. Vail

The New-York Historical Society

THE PUBLISHER EXPLAINS

If it had not been for pure, unadulterated curiosity, the original of this narrative of the old frontier would never have lived beyond the smoke and smell of a New England bonfire. And if it had not been for R.W.G. Vail's moral support, this reprint might never have been published.

On the floor of a library whose four walls were completely hidden by shelves of gilt-tooled calf, morocco and pictorial cloth, rose a six foot haystack of rubbish. It was composed of broken bindings, crumbling eighteenth-century leather, pamphlets and magazines without covers, torn and tattered broadsides, circulars, old ledgers and letters, all waiting patiently for the janitor. At the very bottom of this repulsive looking funeral pyre, carefully tucked in an envelope marked "old almanac", lay the narrative of James Van Horne.

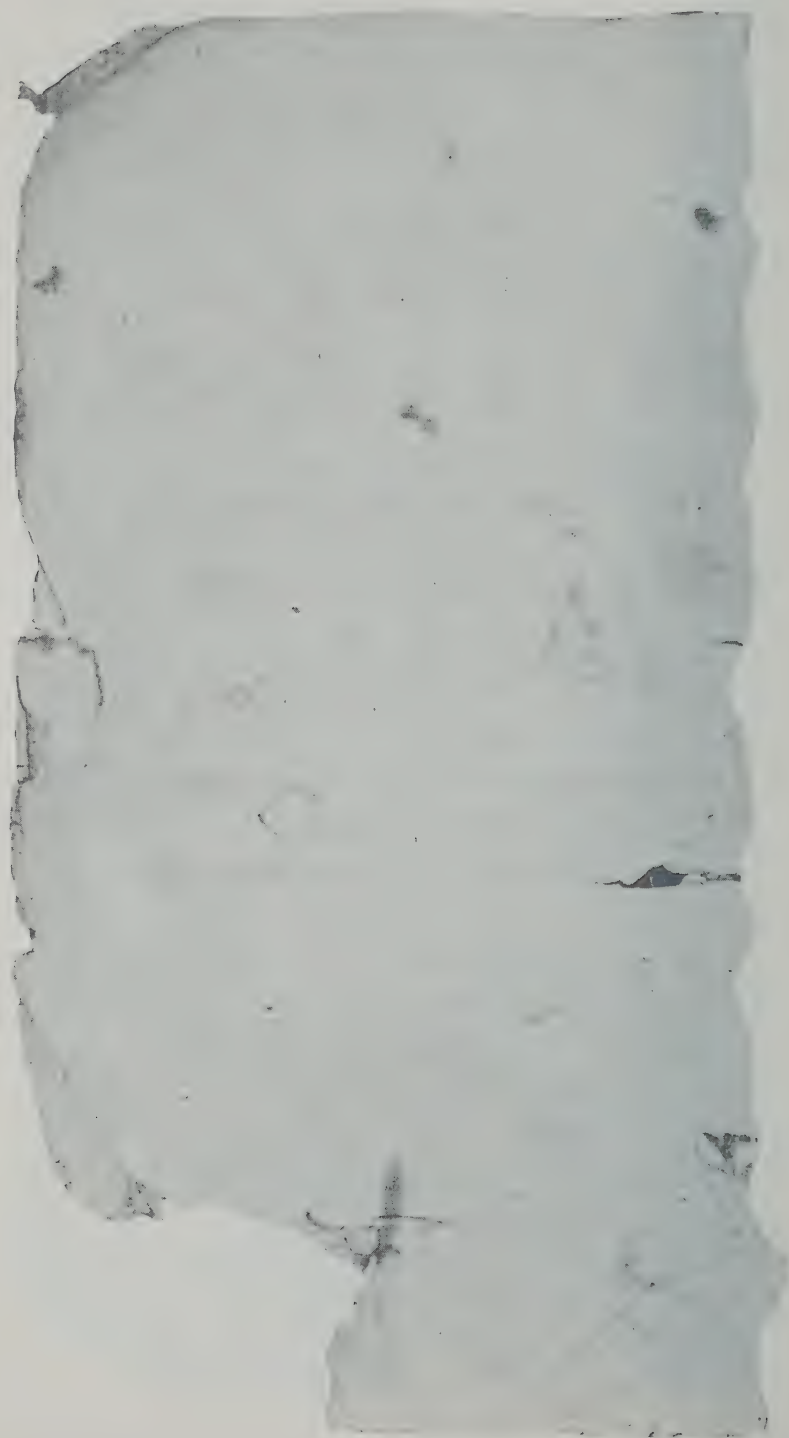
Apparently no other copy of this crudely printed tale has survived. The opportunity of reading it should be extended beyond the sacred vault of some private or institutional collection. I hope this small volume will be placed where both the American student and casual reader may acquire a more thorough understanding of the hardships, privations, sacrifices, struggles and sufferings of the men who built our Country.

Lawrence B. Romaine

NARRATIVE
OF THE
CAPTIVITY & SUFFERINGS
OF
JAMES VAN HORNE,
WHO WAS NINE MONTHS A PRISONER BY THE
INDIANS ON THE
PLAINS OF MICHIGAN.

MIDDLEBURY VT.

1817.



NARRATIVE, &c.

THE Territory of Michigan is bounded on the north by the Straits of Michilimackinac, south by Ohio and Indiana, east by Lakes Huron and St. Clair, West by Lake Michigan. Its length from north to south is 356 miles; breadth from east to west, 154; containing 34,820 square miles, or 22,284,000 acres. Near the center of this Territory are highlands, but nothing like mountains are to be seen. With the exception just mentioned, the Territory of Michigan presents a level appearance. The climate is mild; and the soil in general, excellent. But with all its advantages, this Territory has fewer inhabitants than any other within the jurisdiction of the United States.

The few settlements made previous to the late war were near the lakes, containing in all less than 5000 inhabitants.

The only town is DETROIT, situated on the Straits that connect lake St. Clair with lake Erie. In 1805, this town was destroyed by fire, but was soon re-built, and now contains about 100 houses and 600 inhabitants.

MICHILIMACKINAC, commonly called, "Mackinaw," is in this Territory. It is a small island in the Straits that connect Huron and Michigan. This island is strongly

garrisoned, and derives much importance from the protection it gives to the American fur traders.

Upon this important station the British made an attack, and captured it before the news of the declaration of war had reached the garrison. For the defence of this Territory and the invasion of the province of Upper Canada, Gen. HULL, in the latter end of May, 1812, at the head of his regulars and the Ohio volunteers, commenced his march through the wilderness, to Detroit. The tribes of Indians through which he passed were unusually friendly. Several chiefs who had before been guilty of many hostilities towards the United States, upon view of his forces entered into allegiance with the General.

Upon the surrender of that army to Gen. Brock, most of the tribes turned their arms against us. They discovered that the vaunting HULL could no longer protect them and resolved to join the successful standard.

With the wiles of Indian warfare they turned our confidence in their faithfulness to their account, for in most cases ~~the war~~ whoop gave the first intimation of their treachery. Such was the policy they pursued at Chicago, a post at the south end of lake Michigan. This military station (about two hundred and fifty miles from Michilimackinac,) is the only one upon that lake.

Gen. Hull, a few days previous to his sur-

render, dispatched order to Capt. Heald the commanding officer at Chicago to abandon the fort and proceed to Detroit. On the 15th of August at 10 o'clock A. M. three days after the fall of Hull, and before the news of that event was known at the fort, Capt. Heald and men, escorted by Capt. Wells of fort Wayne and a body of Miamies, commenced their march.

The situation of the country rendered it necessary for us to take the beach. On our left was the lake—on our right a high sand bank at about an hundred yards distance.

We had proceeded about a mile and a half when it was discovered the Indians were preparing to attack us from behind the bank. Capt. Heald immediately marched up with us to the top of the bank, and the battle commenced and continued until half after two o'clock, P.M. when we were compelled to surrender—our number which consisted of 54 regulars and twelve militia, being reduced to eighteen men, and six of them wounded, out of fifty-two privates, and four officers.

The number of Indians was 684, who had drawn rations that morning from the United States, had formed a firm alliance with them. There were also killed of American subjects, one white woman, 12 white children and 1 black woman. On the same day, the prisoners were taken back to the fort, where six of the wounded were massacred by the Indians. Their names were James Lata,

Jacob Landon, Richard Gardner, Prestly Andrews, Micajah Dennison, and Thomas Burns. We were divided among the different tribes of Indians, and remained in the fort that night.

On the morning of the 16th of August, the Indians set the fort on fire, and the family that I had been allotted to, marched off about 15 miles westward and encamped on the river Plain. In the evening of that day, a part of the same tribe came to the encampment with three men, one woman and 3 children, prisoners. After having prepared their encamping ground and made fires, they opened a bag and took out two men's hearts and some of the flesh of their breasts. They hung up the two hearts over the fire to dry; then one of them took a piece of the flesh and broiled and ate it, and feeling of my breast made motions to the other Indians that a piece of it would be good to eat.

On the 17th in the morning, we all marched a southwest course,—the day was very hot and the grass on the plains high—and we marched until sun set without tasting victuals or drink, except a little water where three Winebagoes were encamped. When we arrived at their camp, the Winebagoes drew their hands across our throats—making signs that if we were theirs, they would cut our throats. After we had encamped they gave us some jirked beef and sugar to eat.

On the morning of the 18th we all march-

ed the same course until about noon, when one man and woman (prisoners) were taken off a N. West course. The party to which I belonged continued a S. W. course. About 2 o'clock we reached Fox river. The town being on the opposite side, they compelled me to wade the river. The water was most of the way up to my shoulders. But I got across safe and when we got into the town a great number of the Indians met us; some would pull my hair, some shook the war club and tomahawk over my head, making some vigorous attempts to kill me, but the old Indian I belonged to prevented them, and saved my life.

On the 19th in the morning they held a council and danced the war dance over the scalps they had taken, and compelled me to set by them and look on. My apprehensions during the time were very great, but still I remained unhurt. In a few days after, I was permitted to go where I liked through the town; the Indians became very friendly to me and gave me the name of *Sheshup*, meaning a *Duck*, in English; which name I expect they gave me on account of my low stature.

On the 26th some of the same tribe came to the town bringing a woman, a child and a man who had been wounded. In consequence of the fatigues of the march, and the warm weather, his wound had mortified. On the 28th the Indians held a council to

put him to death. The old Indian to whom I belonged told me to tell him they were going to kill him, which I refused to do. The Indian then flew in a great rage, and threw a hatchet to kill me. After long persuasion I went and told him; he plead to have his life spared a few days, which they agreed to, and he recovered. On the 3d September, in the morning, the Indian which I belonged to, told me to prepare myself for a march, to visit a French trader; which I accordingly did, and we arrived there on the 7th of September. It was a trader well known to me, and I entreated him to get me from the Indians: He told me that it was impossible, for the British held Detroit, and the Indians were determined to keep all the prisoners they could catch.

On the 8th the Indians crossed the river and went to the battle ground—where I saw the dead cut open and their hearts taken out.—I there saw one of the women that was with child, scalped, cut open, and her child taken out, scalped, and stabbed in various places. This dreadful sight filled my heart with sorrow, and made me dull and sad, on perceiving which the Indian asked me what was the matter. I told him nothing—but he still insisted on it. That night he tied me, being apprehensive that I would run away, as I knew the ground.

On the morning of the 9th, he set out for his village, and a heavy rain came on which

continued through the day. When we stopped at night, I was compelled to prepare the camp. Being much fatigued and hungry, having eaten nothing for three days, and having marched all that time through the Prairie where the grass was as high as my shoulders—I was weak and faint and could not go fast, on which the Indian raised his tomahawk to knock me down—saying I was stubborn, &c. but was prevented by the other Indian.—I was permitted to set by the fire and they gave me some corn to eat.

On the 10th we set out again, the storm still continuing, and they made me carry all the baggage. The next day we arrived at the village; I was almost dead from hunger, and they gave me some corn.

On the 12th, some Indians came to the village, bringing one of the prisoners with them, and I was very glad to see him: He told me that two of the prisoners were killed on the first day's march from the battle ground. I told him I was afraid it would be our lot to be killed; for a French trader had told me the British held Detroit, and we had no chance to make our escape. The same evening, the Indian who came with the prisoner took his departure. I still remained at the village, was kept half-starved and compelled to do all their drudgery. They stripped me of my clothes, rubbed my skin over with a yellow clay, pulled

out my beard and shaved off all my hair. This was done to make me resemble the Indians in color.

Here I continued till the 25th of October, when they all marched off for their hunting ground, making me carry all the baggage, as usual, which was very heavy.—We marched a west course. The day was very stormy and having no clothes, I suffered much from cold. At night I had to prepare fire wood for all the Indians, which they made me to understand I must do every night. The 25th being stormy, they remained there. On the 27th the Indian L belonged to, started a north west course. The day was very cold, and I suffered much from hunger. We encamped about 2 o'clock, where we remained until the 13th of November. While we remained here the Indian killed some deer and made himself a coat of some of the skins, and gave me his old one. On the 14th we marched a north course, and at night encamped, where we remained until the 2d of December; during which time we killed a great many deer and racoon, and found a plenty of wild honey. Here I fared very well.—On the 3d of Dec. we marched a north course and the same evening encamped: Here we remained until the 13th, when an Indian came on express from Detroit to the village, for the Indians to assemble at Detroit, as they expected the Americans there. On the 14th,

the tribe to which I belonged went to the banks of Fox River, where all the rest of the tribes assembled for war. There I found some of my fellow prisoners, men and women, and was very glad to see them, for I expected they had been killed. I went into one of the cabins, where I found one of the women, and asked her where her child was, she told me the Indians tied it to a tree on the 4th of December because it cried after her for something to eat, and it froze to death. After this the mother was tied to a tree and kept three days and nights, where she almost perished with hunger and cold. They tied her out again in January and she died.

The Indians held a council of war on the banks of Fox river, and on the 18th all started for Detroit, leaving the prisoners in the care of the old men and squaws. During their absence we almost starved. On the 9th I went into one of the lodges, where I saw one of the prisoners gnawing the leg of a horse which had starved to death. On the 17th one of the prisoners was sent out to hunt the Indian horses. He was destitute of clothes, the snow was five feet deep, and the weather so cold that he froze to death. On the 29th, some of the warriors returned from the battle of the River Raisin, bringing a great number of scalps as trophies of victory. As they came in they gave them to me and asked if I knew them;

I told them no. From the great number of scalps I supposed they had penetrated far into the interior of the States. On the 6th of Feb. they held their war dance, over the scalps and hearts. On the 7th, the Indian that I belonged to, packed up a heavy load and told me I must march to the sugar camp. The load was so heavy that I could not stir, and he drew his club and knocked me down, which made two severe wounds on my head. My load was lightened. We marched through the deep snow, and on the 9th arrived at the sugar camp. On the 10th my work was making sugar troughs and getting fire wood—all this time I had nothing to eat; and hoped every day that an end would shortly be put to my misery. On the 23d, the weather moderated so that they began to make sugar. I was compelled to carry sap all day without any thing to eat. In March the snow left the ground and they set me to dig the Indian Potatoe, and at night boil sugar. On the 5th April they quit making sugar. On the 8th I was packed off with fur, to the French traders, where I arrived on the 10th: They were traders whom I knew. I begged of one of them to buy me from the Indians: He told me the British General Proctor had sent a proclamation to the Indians to send all the prisoners to Detroit; but gave me his word that if the Indians did not take me to Detroit, he would do all he could to get me clear.

On the 15th we started for the village, where we arrived on the 18th. I was almost famished with hunger, but was compelled to do all their drudgery. On the 6th of May the trader's brother came to the village and told the Indians to bring the prisoners to Chicago, for he had received orders from the Great Father, meaning the British King, to buy all the prisoners. On the 9th we started for Chicago; I was so weak as hardly to be able to walk: But the thoughts of being ransomed from the Indians, gave me much comfort. We arrived at Chicago on the 12th, and the trader gave them two horses for me. On the 14th the Indians brought in a man and woman, whom the trader also bought.

On the 16th some warriors returned from Detroit, bringing a great number of scalps, and said they had defeated the Americans, which I understood was colonel Dudley's defeat. On the 18th I was taken sick. On the 19th Mr. Basall, the trader who bought me, told me that he must start, for the Indians came in so fast that it was unsafe to stay any longer. The same evening we started and went to the river Grand Calumack, which is the line between the Indiana and Michigan Territories. On the 20th we went a south east course and encamped at the river Gailan: The next day we went to St. Joseph's--I being very sick he lay by

one day, thinking I would get better; but the Indians were so numerous he was afraid they would kill the prisoners. On the 23d we started for Mackinac, where we arrived on the 11th of June. The prisoners who were bought of the Indians had all arrived at this place. I was happy to see them.— We were all given up to a British captain, who treated us very kindly. Multitudes of Indians arrived at this place, and on the 24th they all started for Detroit. An interpreter told me there was 500 warriors, under the command of Gen. Dixon. On the 26th we embarked for Malden and arrived there on the 7th of July. We were put on board a prison-ship, where were a great number of Kentucky militia. The Indians were constantly endeavoring to come on board the prison-ship to massacre us—in so-much that the British had to bring their armed vessels along-side to protect us. On the 23d the British fleet sailed for Presque-Isle to attack the Americans, but returned on the 4th of August, and said they could not get the Americans out of the harbor. They got their new vessels ready and started on an expedition to Fort Meigs and Lower Sandusky. They returned on the 29th of July, having met with ill success. We were told they suffered severely, having lost a great number of men. The Indians now became very troublesome, for they had no provisions.

On the 15th of August they launched their new ship, and made every preparation to attack the British fleet. A British officer came on board the prison and saw we had no clothes or blankets. He told us he would do all he could to get us some—he was unable however, to procure any. He then brought the commodore and col. Warbriton into the prison to see our wretched situation. The commodore said he would examine his clothing and see what he had to spare.—Each of us received a pair of trowsers and a pair of shoes. Maj. Chambers was very kind to us, and gave each of us half a pound of soap a week to wash our clothes. On the 1st of Sept. as one of the prisoners was hanging out his clothes he espied the American fleet; this struck terror into the British army—they assembled all their Indians, expecting an attack. The British fleet lay under their batteries. After sailing round the harbor the American fleet stood off.—The Indians then held a council of war—they were very angry and called the British cowards for not going out to fight the American fleet. On the 4th of September a number of sailors arrived to man the fleet, and on the 6th they went out to attack the Americans: The next day we heard a terrible cannonading, which gave the British great apprehension—the troops were kept under arms. The same evening news came.

in that the British were bringing in the American fleet, on which the whole place was illuminated : but the next day, having no tidings of the fleet, they sent out some Indians in bark canoes, to learn their fate. The Indians returned on the 13th and said the Americans had taken their fleet--this put the British in great consternation. They began to destroy their fortifications : This dissatisfied the Indians, and they asked the reason of their destroying the fort--the English told them they were going to leave it and make a stand on the river Trench. The Indians told them they should not go and called them cowards--said they were going to leave them and their children to be murdered by the Americans--told them they said they never would run away from the Americans. The British then stopped tearing down their works, and did it by night when the Indians were gone away. We were then taken on shore and the prison ship filled with shot and shells. We asked where we were to be taken and they said to Quebec ; on which we resolved to make our escape. Some of the prisoners broke out that night but were brought back by the picket guard. On the 19th we sailed for the river Trench. Several prisoners were taken on board at Detroit, who had been brought in by the Indians. In going up the river Trench the ship run aground,

and we were ordered to unload her, which we at first refused ; but they swore they would keep us there, without provision, until we complied. Intelligence was received that the Americans were advancing towards Detroit, and we were taken to Dalsen where they gave us something to eat, for the first time in 3 days. On the 24th of September they put 4 days provisions in a wagon and started the prisoners for Burlington heights, under a guard of Indians commanded by a British officers. The 26th a violent storm commenced which continued for several days, during which time our provision was all destroyed. We were almost destitute of clothes and shoes, had no provision, and were so weak we could scarcely travel. At night the Indians would tie a great number of us together, and we were allowed 1 bushel of potatoes among 10 of us. We arrived at Burlington heights on the 4th of October--on the 5th we marched for York under a Militia guard ; we arrived there the 8th--on the 11th we started for Kingston under a Glengarian officer, a cruel and inhuman brute--he treated us with the greatest severity ! What little provision we got was so damaged that it was unfit to eat. On the 15th we arrived at Hamilton, about half way between York and Kingston--here we were permitted to stay one day on account of our feet being sore. On

the 17th we started for Kingston under a militia guard—there was snow on the ground and the weather was very cold, and we were almost naked. On the 19th of October we arrived at Kingston, where we were kept in jail in our naked situation, without fire. On the 24th we started for Montreal in batteaux, and arrived there the 28th. We remained here until the 6th of November, when we started for Québec in the Steam boat, where we arrived on the 18th. The American agent came in to see us—and a miserable sight he saw, for we were almost naked and famished with hunger. Here we suffered much for want of wood and water till May, 1814, when we were exchanged, and returned to the United States.

